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BOROUGH OF MONMOUTH.

REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

(DR. W. H. WILLIAMS).

For the year ended December 31st, 1925.

BOROUGH OF MONMOUTH.

Report of the Medical Officer of Health,

For the year ending December 31st, 1925.

TO THE MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND COUNCILLORS OF THE
BOROUGH OF MONMOUTH.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present to you my Annual Report upon the Vital Statistics, Sanitary Circumstances and Sanitary Administration of your district for the year ending December 31st, 1925. It has been compiled upon the lines suggested in Circular 648, Welsh Board of Health.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT.

The district comprises an area of 5,707 acres. The population at the Census in 1921 was 5,110 and the estimated population to the middle of 1925 was 5,050. The social conditions are typical of a small country town where the surrounding districts are agricultural. There are no large factories nor industries in the area.

Purchasers from industrial areas come to the town in considerable numbers on market days once a week and on stock market days once a fortnight.

The district is famous for its beauty and for its historical features and is therefore a popular resort in the summer months.

PHYSICAL FEATURES OF THE DISTRICT.

The district is situated in the Eastern part of the County of Monmouth, on the borders of Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, where the river Monnow enters the Wye.

Part of the town is low-lying and some of the houses suffer severely when these rivers become flooded which occurs from time to time.

Between the valleys of the Monnow and Wye, however, the ground rises sharply and the houses standing on the hillside to the North of the town obtain views of particular beauty even in this picturesque district. The area is served by the Great Western Railway, the Wye Valley branch and the Pontypool branch forming a junction at Monmouth.

In recent years there has been a large developement of road transport and now motor buses convey inhabitants of the rural districts to the town from all sides.

Number of inhabited houses (1921)	..	1211
Number of families or separate oecupiers (1921)..		1240
Rateable value	..	£30798
Sum represented by a penny rate		£80

VITAL STATISTICS.

Births	{		Males	Females	Total
	{	Legitimate ..	51	39	90
	{	Illegitimate ..	2	3	5
			<hr/> 53	<hr/> 42	<hr/> 95

The birth rate for the district in 1925 was 18·8 per 1,000.

The corresponding rate for the County of Monmouth was 21·5 and for England and Wales 18·8.

The birth rate for the past five years for this district was as follows:—1920, 24·85 per 1,000; 1921, 24·00 per 1,000; 1922, 19·7 per 1,000; 1923, 19·7 per 1,000; 1924, 17·7 per 1,000.

	Males	Females	Total
Deaths	44	46	90

The death rate for 1925 was ~~17·8~~ 17·8 per 1,000.

The corresponding rate for Monmouth County was 10·6, and for England and Wales 12·2 per 1,000.

The death rate for the district for the past five years was:—1924, 14·9 per 1,000; 1923, 13·7 per 1,000; 1922, 15·3 per 1,000; 1921, 15·6 per 1,000; 1920, 15·17 per 1,000.

Of these deaths 15 occurred from cancer, 16 from heart disease, 7 from tuberculosis, 3 from diphtheria, 3 from whooping cough and 1 from measles.

Deaths of Infants under One Year of Age.

		Males	Females	Total
Legitimate ..		3	6	9
Illegitimate ..		0	1	1
		<hr/> 3	<hr/> 7	<hr/> 10

The Infantile Mortality rate for the year was 105·0 per 1,000 net births.

The corresponding rate for the County of Monmouth was 83·8 and for England and Wales 75.

The corresponding rates for this district for the past five years were:—1920, 105·26; 1921, 145·0; 1922, 98·0; 1923, 75·0; 1924, 56·1.

The ages at which these children died are as follows:—under one week, 1; between one and three months, 1; between three and six months, 5; between six and nine months, 1; between nine and twelve months, 2.

The amount of Poor Law Relief has been £1758 compared with £1894 in 1924.

There has been an epidemic of diphtheria during the year to which I refer later, otherwise there have been no causes of sickness specially noteworthy.

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE AREA.

The following hospitals are available for the inhabitants of the district:—

- (1) TUBERCULOSIS. Hospitals provided by the King Edward VII. National Memorial.
- (2) MATERNITY. Monmouth (Poor Law).
- (3) CHILDREN. Monmouth (Poor Law).
- (4) FEVER. Monmouth (Local Authority).
- (5) SMALL-POX. County Council Hospital.
- (6) GENERAL HOSPITAL (Monmouth).

There is a children's home in the district and a home for unmarried mothers at Nantyduffy.

AMBULANCE FACILITIES.

- (a). Infectious cases are taken to hospital in a horse drawn vehicle provided by the Local Authority.
- (b). Non-infectious and accident cases are dealt with by a motor ambulance, the property of the Monmouth Corporation.

The provision of this ambulance has been of great value to the district.

The ambulance, originally provided for war-service by voluntary subscription, was subsequently returned at the end of the war and was taken over by the Local Authority.

A detachment of the St. John's Ambulance Brigade has been formed in the town and from its members the necessary staff for equipping the ambulance is provided.

Under Mr. Alvis (the Divisional Superintendent) the Brigade have rendered efficient service in all kinds of ambulance work and much praise is due to these voluntary workers, who give their time and skill for the benefit of the neighbourhood. Since the formation of the branch 193 first-aid cases have been attended and 216 "individual public duties." The ambulance has run 918 miles up to date.

CLINICS AND TREATMENT CENTRES.

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE—A clinic is held weekly in the town on market days, under the County Council.

TUBERCULOSIS—A clinic is held fortnightly in the town under the King Edward VII. National Memorial.

SCHOOL CLINICS—Visiting Medical Officers and Nurses, under the County Council, hold clinics at the Schools.

VENEREAL DISEASES—A clinic is held at Newport under the County Council.

The Child Welfare Clinic is made use of by mothers from this and the Rural Districts. 1,461 attendances were registered during the year.

The local committee make personal investigation into the applications for free food and allow claims only when there is real necessity.

The work of the clinic has steadily increased since its inauguration.

The committee of management of the General Hospital a few years ago decided, for financial reasons, to give up providing free medicine to out-patients attending the hospital. The Medical Officers gave prescriptions which patients had to have dispensed at their own expense. I am glad to report that now the committee have reverted to the old custom and the necessitous poor are provided with free medical requisites.

The Voluntary Aid Detachment (Monmouth 10) of the British Red Cross Society, which did such excellent work during the war, has been re-organized and is now a valuable working factor in the district. The nurses do relief work when required, attend clinics and are to be relied upon to come forward in all emergencies.

Further the detachment has inaugurated a Medical Supply Depot where the poor of the district can hire, for a trifling fee, medical and surgical comforts, e.g. bed-rests, air-cushions, bath-chairs, etc.

The Depot is well organized and much appreciated.

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY.

There is one Medical Officer (part time) and one Sanitary Inspector and Surveyor.

PROFESSIONAL NURSING IN THE HOME.

(a). *General*.—There is one district nurse, provided by a Local Nursing Association. This nurse is a trained midwife and does a certain amount of this work when other midwives are not available.

(b). *Infectious cases in the homes*.—There is no provision for the nursing of these cases.

Midwives.—The Local Authority do not subsidize any nurses. There are three midwives practising in the town.

BYELAWS.

Good Rule and Government	..	..	1870
Slaughter-houses	..	..	18 5
Cleansing of Pavements	..	..	1895
Lodging Houses	..	..	1895
Provention of Nuisances	..	..	1895
New Buildings	..	..	1895
Cattle Markets	..	..	1895
New Streets and Buildings	..	..	1925

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

Water.—The Monmouth Gas and Water Company supply the Town with water, principally from springs in the Buckholt Woods.

The river Wye provides another source of water which is pumped up to filter beds at Wyesham.

Houses on the outskirts of the area obtain water from springs and wells.

The supply is generally ample and of good quality.

The water is analysed from time to time and no pollution nor contamination has been reported.

Rivers and Streams.—There are still a few houses which drain directly into the rivers, but the number is being steadily reduced.

Drainage and Sewerage.—The new sewers discharge into collecting tanks in Chippenham and from there the sewage is pumped to the filter beds, the effluent passing into the Wye

Power for pumping used to be supplied by the Electric Light Works and in my last report I called the attention of the Council to the inadequacy of this procedure. I am pleased to report that the pumping is now regularly and properly performed.

Though I fear the expense is considerable, the collecting tanks are now regularly emptied and cleaned.

There are still too many houses connected with the old sewer, but the number is steadily decreasing and last year 15 old houses were connected up with the new sewer.

Closet Accommodation.—There are still a few hand-flushed closets in some of the old houses and there are a few middens in the district, but, as I have shown in my housing report, considerable improvements have been carried out during the year.

Scavenging.—This is carried out by the local authority and improvements have been instituted during the year.

The Council have adopted a Byelaw respecting the provision of proper receptacles for the removal of house refuse.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area.—Regular inspections of the district have been carried out. Over 300 inspections have been made on sanitary matters, 43 statutory and many informal notices have been served. The result of these notices has been generally satisfactory.

In my last report I urged the Council to take stronger action in securing a prompt reply to their wishes. I am pleased to report that during the past year there has been an apprecable improvement in this matter.

Premises and Occupations which can be controlled by Byelaws—The Slaughter-houses, Bake-houses, Factories and Workshops have been inspected and generally found to be in proper condition.

A group of small cottages used for letting lodgings has been closed.

A new lodging house has been licensed after considerable structural alterations to the premises had been made.

The Schools under the County Council have been kept in proper condition.

At the High School and Grammar School alterations and extensions of sanitary arrangements have been carried out and these schools may be considered to be in excellent condition.

HOUSING.

1. **General Housing Conditions in the Area.**—The general housing conditions are typical of those of a very old country town, where the variation in population is slight. There are a number of excellent working-class houses with good gardens, but a number of the old houses, built without knowledge or thought of sanitation, are still occupied.

There is no real shortage of houses, but a shortage of good houses.

2. **Overcrowding.**—This is not common and occurs from time to time in growing families.

3. **Fitness of Houses.**—(a) The bad features of the older houses are usually:—lack of through ventilation, low roofs, insufficient and improper privy accommodation, dampness and lack of drainage.

Some of the houses occupied cannot be made reasonably fit for human habitation, but there are a number which can be greatly improved.

(b) The action of the Council as regards unfit houses and the difficulties found in remedying unfitness is dealt with in the succeeding paragraph.

4. **General Miscellaneous.**—The Council, during the past year, have taken up the question of housing defects on a new system.

A new housing sub-committee was appointed and the condition of the houses in the district is being studied systematically. Meanwhile improvements are being carried out by owners of property.

Another sub-committee is considering the question of whether the Council should embark upon a building scheme.

The difficulties met with in remedying unfit houses are really financial.

No difficulty should be experienced in making the owner of property, for which he is getting a reasonable rent, put and keep that property in good repair, but owners who get little and sometimes no rent for old and dilapidated houses are naturally unwilling to spend money for which they see no return.

The Council, however, have taken strong action in certain cases and I hope in future to report a steady improvement in the housing conditions of the district.

HOUSING STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1925.

Number of new houses during the year:—		
(a) Total	...	3
(b) With state assistance under the Housing Acts, 1919 or 1923:—		
(i) By the Local Authority	...	Nil
(ii) By other bodies or persons	...	Nil
1. <i>Unfit Dwelling-houses</i>		
Inspection—1 Total number of dwelling-houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)	...	88
(2) Number of dwelling-houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations 1910	...	46
(3) Number of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	...	6
(4) Number of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-heading) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation	...	21
2. <i>Remedy of defects without Service of formal Notices.</i>		
Number of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequences of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers.		7
3. <i>Action under Statutory Powers.</i>		
A.—Proceedings under section 28 of the Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act, 1919.		
(1) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs		21
(2) Number of dwelling-houses which were rendered fit:—		21
(a) by owners	...	0
(b) by Local Authority in default of owners	...	0
(3) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders became operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close	...	0
B.—Proceedings under Public Health Acts.		
(1) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied	...	42
(2) Number of dwelling-houses in which defects were remedied:—		42
(a) by owners	...	0
(b) by Local Authority in default of owners.	...	0
C.—Proceedings under sections 17 and 18 of the Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act, 1919.		
(1) Number of representations made with a view to the making of Closing Orders	...	5
(2) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders were made	...	5
(3) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the dwelling-houses having been reded fit	...	0
(4) Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made	...	0
(5) Number of dwelling-houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders	...	0

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOODS.

(a) **Milk Supply.**—The supply of milk comes largely from without the district and is generally of good quality and ample. Number on register 25.

Samples of milk are purchased for analysis from time to time and prosecutions instituted when necessary. During the years under review a few convictions were reported, especially for deficiency of fat.

(b) **Meat and other Foods.**—The food inspectors are provided by the County Council.

	In 1920	In Jan. 1925	In Dec. 1925.
Slaughter-houses Licensed	..	1	1

(c). **Other Foods.**—During the year the Inspector informs me that one joint of frozen meat and four cases of tinned meats had to be destroyed. The bake-houses have been regularly inspected and are reported as being satisfactory.

PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

The occurrence of notifiable infectious diseases for the past five years is shown in the following table:—

	Scarlet Fever	Diphtheria	Enteric	Puerperal Fever	Chicken-pox
1920	.. 5	1	0	0	0
1921	.. 14	7	3	0	0
1922	.. 34	2	0	1	14
1923	.. 19	2	1	0	14
1924	.. 2	10	0	0	9

Chicken-pox was made notifiable by order of the Council, in 1922, when there were a considerable number of small-pox cases in the neighbouring districts. This area escaped the epidemic.

Towards the end of 1921 and for the following eighteen months there were a number of mild cases of Scarlatina in the district.

Several of the cases were not discovered till the peeling stage, which fact is sufficient to explain the continuance of the epidemic.

Diphtheria continues to occur from time to time in the district. Swabs have been taken from all the schools where diphtheria occurred and one carrier was detected.

Swabs were taken from many other contact cases and by this means another carrier was found. Both these carriers were isolated until negative swabs were obtained.

The Shick test has not been used in this district.

The County Council Laboratory is freely used for examinations of pathological specimens by the local authority and by practitioners in the district.

Whooping-cough was prevalent during the year, and some severe cases occurred in young children.

The following notifications were made during the year:—

Diseases.	Total Cases Notified.	Cases admitted to Hospital.	Deaths.
Small-pox	0	0	0
Scarlet Fever	6	5	0
Diphtheria	17	13	3
Paratyphoid	1	1	0
Puerperal Fever	0	0	0
Varicella	1	0	0

Of the deaths one child was three years of age and two were under two years of age.

TUBERCULOSIS.

Age Period.	New Cases				Deaths.			
	Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary,	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
15—19	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
20—24	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
25—34	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
35—44	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
45—64	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Totals ..	4	0	0	0	5	2	0	0

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

(1) and (2) The clinic to which I have briefly referred earlier in the report is carried out by the County Council and details of its work will be found in the Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the County.

(3) Only one case of puerperal fever was reported during the years under review. I am not certain that these cases are properly notified and practitioners should realise that it is only through prompt notification that the spreading of this condition can be checked.

Ophthalmia Neonatorum is rare. There were no cases reported in 1925.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient servant,

W. HUMPHREY WILLIAMS.

